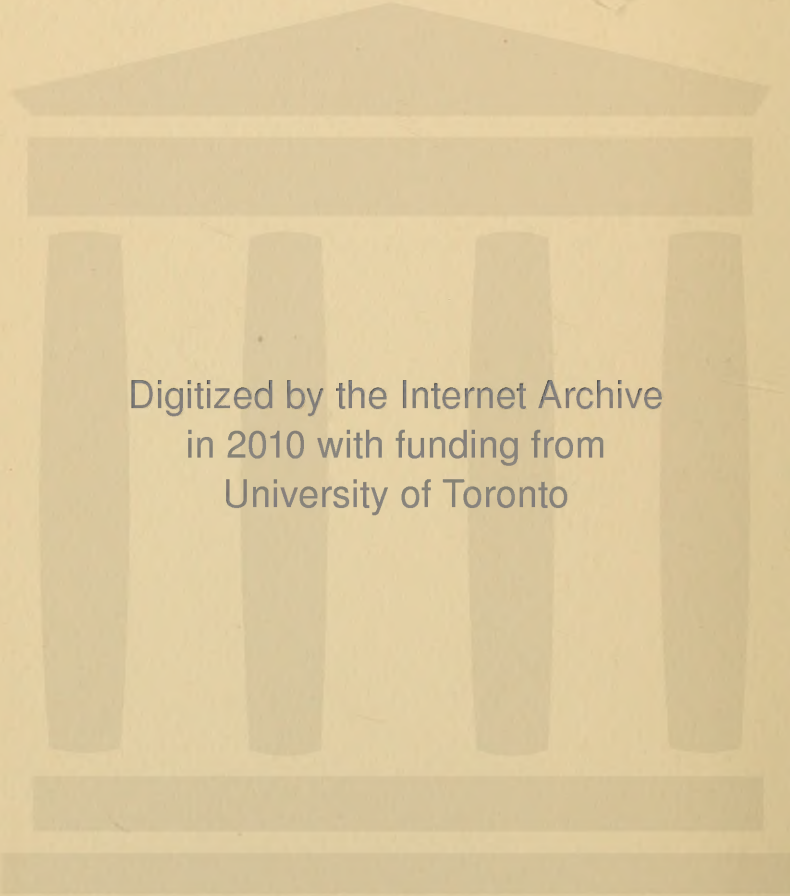


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Confession and Other Verses



By May Austin Low



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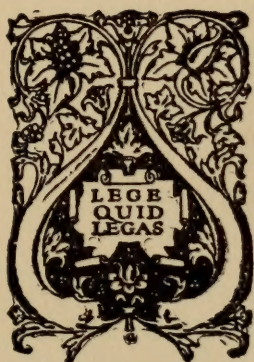
Confession

And Other Verses

10-29-07

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May Austin Low

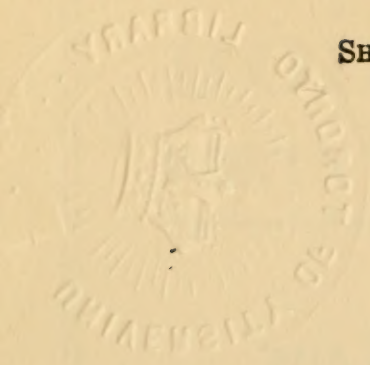


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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER



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CONFESSION

GOD, I have hated life! I have lain
Lone, in the long night pressed with pain,
And cried to the happy heedless air:
Help me, oh, help me, my life to bear.

Now that there comes a thought of death,
A leaving of life's exultant breath,
I see how fair is this fitful life.
The thought of struggle, of sorrow's strife,
Fall on my memory as being naught
Compared to this coming, cruel thought
Of death, dark death! No more to feel
The fresh spring air to the senses steal,
Nor mark the sun as it makes the sky
A marvel to man's mysterious eye;
Nor hear the birds as they burst in song
Above the moving, marvellous throng
Of human creatures, to own no sense;
Unconsciousness for recompense.

Life is so lovely let me live,
I dare not dream what death will give:
And I fear the earth I fondly trod,
Fear the falling of fresh turned sod
On my frigid form through the autumn's gust,
And the minister's murmured "dust to dust."

How many have gone to the great unknown,
Like a flame that fell, or a candle blown!
How many have felt this most fearful fear —
The dread of leaving the hearts so dear,
For what can the Mighty Mystery give
To compensate us for the joy to live?

I do not say I am glad to go.
Thou knowest all things, and Thou must know
How my spirit clings to this beauteous earth,
While my love is with her who gave me birth!
Ah! I long to live— life is so sweet;
Though every promise lies incomplete,
The trial seems trivial all things so small
By the side of this dying more dread than all —
So dark, so dread! I have often cried
To think of all the souls that have died.
Yet the world goes on in its selfsame way,
For all that is human has but its day.

Is my day done, with my dreams still here?
Dreams that have grown so great and dear,
Dreams that must die with my conscious sense,
And but “dust to dust” be recompense.

THE VIOLIN PLAYER

HE plays as the passers hurry,
In the pulse of the early day:
Plays as the children scamper
Heedlessly on their way,
Plays! as the swift hours carry
The heart of the day along,
With his weary form on the kerb stone,
And the soul of his youth in his song.

What do they know of his playing,
A merry or mournful air?
But ah! what memories are swaying
His heart, as he fiddles there:
There are scenes of early childhood,
A mother beside the door,
A bird that trills from the wild-wood,
Himself — a child once more.

You may pass in your pride and splendour
Untouched by the music's throes,
But there lives a joy to the fiddler
That only the fiddle knows.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT

O WOMEN, does it touch you, the sorrow of
the way
Which some perforce must travel betwixt the night
and day:

The sorrow and the struggle and all the bitter
cost
For having and for holding what must so soon be
lost?

O women, does it stir you, the thought of all that's
done
Between the rising of the star, the setting of life's
sun?

Of all that's done and suffered, the doing that is
vain
To help a heart upon the road or to relieve its
pain.

What can we do to help them, the men who face
the fight,
The ever waging warfare between the wrong and
right?

What can we do to help them? Ah! 'tis the
woman's part
To stay at home and holpen some loving, loyal
heart.

There are men enough for battle, men who will
form the fight.

Let's stay at home to greet them and make their
coming bright.

Their strong true hearts are for us, their work
is for the world.

What need for us to join them? Our flags are best
unfurled.

Above the quiet fireside, and there we watch and
pray

Success attend the stalwart and speed the victor's
day.

And so it stands the strong, tried truth, from
which 'tis vain to roam,

Woman was made to be the stay, the joy, of some
man's home.

FROM THE NIGHT

CHILL is the night: Cold stars
Creep from the clouds, and stare
Down on the fields afar —
And branches brown and bare.

Chill is my soul: Cold winds
Spring from the past, to press
Their hands upon my heart, and wake
Grief's unforgetfulness.

FULFILMENT

THE shadow of death in the place;
Outside a blossoming tree;
A tender smile on his face,—
“My girl you will write of me.”

The clasp of a father's hand,
The glance of a fond, firm eye,
And I could not understand
That for life we had to die.

My lips clung close to his,
Cold with shortening breath—
What a wonder this thing is!
The darkness men call death.

I smoothed the pillows white,
The better to make him rest,
He spoke with loving light,
“You do it all of the best.”

Then when the struggle came,
On my knees I had to fall,
Calling that well loved name,
Dazed, and yet knowing all;

Hearing the soft sweet tone,
Falling clearly upon the air,
Never a sigh or moan,
But the words of our Lord's own prayer.

Then it was over. There lay
The form so true, so dear,
That speak or touch as I may
No more can feel or hear.

“Daddy!” I called that name
He was wont to greet with a smile,
But never an answer came,
Though I called and called the while.

He was gone — no more, no more
Might I meet his answering look,
Nor run, as I ran before
To read him a new found book.

To feel the joy of his praise,
Before it reached my ear
To walk his favorite ways,
His tender tone to hear.

Never to meet his smile,
His radiant face to see,
But I keep his words the while,
“My girl you will write of me.”

CHAMBLY

ITS skies are bluer than the brightest blue
Of other skies. Its waters run more clear:
The cadence of its chimes ring out more true
And song birds soothe, delight, entrance the ear.

Its grasses grow more gladly: every tree
Tells tales of happiness; each hawthorne hedge
Holds a delight: the rapids running free
Caress frail flowers crouching at its edge.

To holy gladness every moment tends;
A promise throbs through the exultant air;
And when the hallowed evening hush descends
It falls upon the spirit like a prayer.

Why do I thus recall it? Can it be
No other place is fair — none other good?
Ah yes! but none can ever be to me
Like that which charmed my earliest maidenhood.

Then life was lovely, guarded by the care
That keeps all earthly hurts so far away;
Then dream was never darkened by despair
Or night time wearied as it greeted day.

Then all things told of goodness and of gain,
And every moment made a deathless song;
Then naught was trifling, nothing mean, or vain,
And no desire could hold a thought of wrong.

So do I view, through tears, the sacred spot
Which sheltered my sweet childhood. Know you
not

It was my spirit painted that pure place,
And gave it thus, to me, immortal grace.

DUFFRYN

I SAID, this house the homestead of my youth,
Whose walls are monuments to childish deeds,
Whose every path is paved with dead desires.
I will restore; and so I rested not
Until I had reclaimed that sacred spot.
I made the walks wind the same well-known way,
And tall white pillars rise, like strong, true arms
Protecting treasures. Honeysuckles twined
O'er the trellisses; old fashioned flowers
Lifted fair faces to the passing winds,
Which trailed their perfume through the passing
air.

Each room I well recalled, and dressed once more
In the gay garb that it had worn of yore.
And when the task was done, revived the dead:
And so "All is as it was then," I said,
I flew along the stair and trembling stood
Before the portal at its summit, where
My footsteps oft had stayed: but ah! no good;
No low toned, loved voice did me welcome there.
And then there surged the knowledge through
each vein

That naught can ever be the same again.
I slowly passed into one room that held
All holy thoughts, no direful dream of care
Could touch me, for these hallowed thoughts dis-
pelled

All harm, I felt that presence like a prayer.
"Oh, God!" I cried, "has it all been for naught,
By pain and penitence may peace be bought."

And as I cried a something in me woke,
And slowly, sadly, madly mocking spoke:
“ Now raise the bridge of faith which safely bore
Thy soul along thy childhood’s cherished shore,
Which fell by thine own fault ’neath folly’s tide,
And left thee lonely on the further side.”
Wildly I sought the fields, their paths I flew
While mocking whispers, memories pure and true,
Pursued my footsteps, every murmur low
Recalled my childhood and increased my woe;
And then I knew the vainest of things vain
Is for a soul to seek the past again.

OLD LOVE

YOU cannot kill old love, it clings
Across the ruins of our lives,
Amongst the chaos that Time brings,
The only thing that thrives.

You cannot kill old love, it starts
To face us in the chill of night,
Flinging its fetters round our hearts,
That leap in new delight.

You cannot kill old love, it lives
Through every thought! and deed! and
wrong!
And waits us at the door of death,
To sing truth's triumph song.

FATE

TO learn the truth in midst of mundane days,
When different might have been our diverse
ways;

This is Time's Mockery when truth had best
Have laid forever on her wounded breast.

REVELATION

“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
St. Matthew xviii, iii.

A QUIET church. Into its aisles I stole
And told to God the sorrow of my soul,
Saying: Thou gav'st me life, now give to me
A firm belief in an Eternity.
Lord, I believe, yet sometimes springs a doubt,
So dark, so dread, I strive to drive it out;
And still it stays and taunts me while I strive
To learn the secrets of the dead! The live!
I am so frail, so full of earthly fear
And without power to feel that Heaven is near;
Help me oh God: Give to me sure belief
And bless me with a blessed, sweet belief
In that Eternity — sure as the skies —
Where “God shall wipe all tears from our eyes.”
This is my sorrow not to comprehend
Eternity — that awesome without end.
I know that Thou art God, a Being Great,
With word and wisdom all inviolate;
But cannot grasp, this inward strange, strange I
Should last, when my frail flesh shall fail and
die
Or is it that I shrink, and fainting dread
To lose the frame my spirit long has led!
I am not good, and yet I love thy law,
And if I had my will would love Thee more,
Help me Oh! God.

As thus in pain I prayed
There came a form that close before me stayed,
A little child that whispered "Have no fear,
The faith of little children brings you here."

WEDDED

IN the pale morn it came,
The knowledge swift and strong,
Swift as a pure white flame —

It may not be for long
That I may stay by you,
That I may touch your hand,
And hear your voice so true.

Dear, do you understand?

If death should claim me his —

His, while I so love life —
Only remember this,
That to have been your wife
Was joy, complete, so great
That, knowing death at hand,
I still had dared my fate.

Dear, do you understand?

“ EARTHBOUND ”

WHERE is the dream of fame,
With the dread of death at hand?
Death, with the summer's flame
Leaping over the land.
Death, with desire of life
Vibrating in every vein.
For who would yield the strife
To gauge the after gain.

Hope went hand in hand
With the mystic, fateful hour
First giving a woman's pain
Rejoicing as its dower.
Hope! It is lost in the dark,
The fear of the unknown. O God,
Give me my little child
And save me from earth's cold sod.

Give me my due of years,
I who have love at my side
I gave in my due of tears,
Now let me joying abide;
For death — it never were best,
However the way may be,
With a babe that longs for your breast
And its father's love at your knee.

Give me my due of years,
They are scant and spare at the best.
With joy and hope in the heart
No being could crave for rest.
For rest is one with the grave,
A silent and sorrowful thing
And I — I long for life,
To hear each earth-bird sing.

To hear each earth-bird sing
In tune to my lullaby,
Which must more gladly ring
Than the music of the sky,
For, whatever the ages say,
The truest praise must rise
When on a blissful day
God looks forth from my baby's eyes.

MATERNITY

FOR who has borne a child knows to the full
Life's sweet completeness; in that pain-
paved hour
Has gauged love's mystery, and braved death's
power,
And lost all thought of self in one white soul,
Flesh of her flesh, which struggles for Life's
breath,
Unknowing of Life's grief, but she, who knows,
Is wrapt in joy so great, all — all were worth
To waken thus — out from the door of death,
And clasp her first-born baby to her breast.

EASTER LILIES

COME near and lay them at the Saviour's feet,
All that are lovely, filled with fragrance
sweet;

Choose but the fairest flowers for that high place,
For naught but what is perfect sees His face.

So speak Earth's creatures: but behold! on high,
Echoes a voice that fills the earth and sky:

"All those are precious, but to me most dear

"The stained, the torn, the trembling, filled with
fear,

"These I would gather closely to my care,

"And make once more, so spotless, pure and fair,

"Choose not the fairest flowers as offering meet;

"The bruised blossoms I would make complete."

MIGNONETTE

IT SEEMS but yesterday

I waited by

The wide, white gate, beneath the summer sky,
And listened for his footstep. O'er the lake
The swallows swept, as though they would awake
The sleeping lilies. Then there firmly fell
His measured tread — the sound I knew so well.
“My girl,” he said, and gave into my hand
A bit of mignonette.

You understand

Now why I mourn: for he, my father, lies
Under the width of many summer skies.
How can I help the sense of fresh regret
Such time there blooms a bit of mignonette?

OUT OF THE NIGHT

I STARTED out of my sleep:
Like a flash the wonder came
What am I? why should I keep
The sanctity of a name?
Why had I cause to be
A being bound by life;
Was living aught to me?
Was aught beyond the strife?

Sick with the sense I lay,
When leapt the blessed thought
Of my childhood's happy days,
Of the bliss by loving brought.
The thought of my mother came
And calmed me like a prayer;
Doubt died with sudden shame —
Peace purified the air.

ENDIANG

A SILENT house now stands where once a
home

Stretched strong, true arms to shelter all it loved.
Its doors are closed; its walls no longer wake
To sounds of revelry. Virginian vines
No more caress the porch, but, falling, plead
For human pity, nestling in their need
Midst medley of heartsease and sweet brier —
Frail roses which now bloom to die uncared —
And ribbon-grasses which still softly wave
Their slender glory through the summer air.

Hark! through the empty rooms, and hushed hall,
The sound of childish voices rise and fall;
The sound of flying footsteps, laughter low —
These are but echoes from the long ago.
This home will never wake again to hear
The happy hearts that still must hold it dear.

THE REQUEST

YOUR eyes will look in hers and drink
 Deep of their tenderness, and smile;
And what your thoughts are, she will think;
 And wholly worship you the while.
Ah! when she has this joy divine
Forget — that so you looked in mine.

Your words will thrill her with their hidden power,
 Your nearness fill her with a sweet delight;
Make her forget brief is Love's longest hour;—
 Your presence makes her day, your absence
 night.—
Ah! while such perfect happiness there be
Forget — that so you spoke to me.

Your kindly kiss will fall on loving lips
 Lips which with ardour cling to your embrace —
And kiss will fall on kiss; her finger tips
 Will softly sweep the love locks from your face.
Ah! while she is so near — so near to thee
Forget — that even so you kissed me.

Your arms will close around her yielding form,
 And draw her happy head upon your breast,—
Can out of joy like this a pain be borne?—
 And you will whisper "Sweet I love you best."
Ah! while she is so close — so close to thee
Forget — that even so you whispered me.

Your love will grow around her life and fill
Her days with happiness, your tender care
Will surely save her soul from slightest ill
Nor let her life be touched by dark despair.
Ah! when she is so much — so much to thee,
Forget — that so your love once sheltered me.

MINUIT

IT IS the hour when phantoms come
To mock with lips we fancied dumb;
When seeing! feeling! breathing! seem
As strange as many a feverish dream.

When from the past old sorrows press
To make our love of living less,
At such an hour — at dark midnight —
What wonder that we doubt the light!

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

OH! Mystery of mysteries — the mist
That meets us at a moment unaware;
That dims the day's delight, that may not lift
To any hand, our heart's most earnest prayer.

When shall it be that I shall be as naught?
Borne from my dear ones? God, who gave me
life,
Knows, and forgives me that the earth is dear,
Despite Heaven's glory, and earth's empty strife.

Oh! Mystery of mysteries — so strange
The end, and the beginning — the between!
What wonder that we tremble as we look,
And scarce can say which is the living scene.

And struggle to see clearly through the day,
And struggle to see clearly through the night,
And only know though Heaven were ours for aye,
We still were blessed by our earthly life.

A CHILD OF THE CITY

THEY may talk of the joys of the
country

And praise its meadows sweet,
But there's naught to my heart so tuneful
As the tread of the horses' feet
On the city's dust-dried pavement,
Throughout the rushing day;
No sound, or sight, or singing,
That can stir my soul that way.

For it's home to me, the hurry,
The noise of the crowded street;
They are friends to me that scurry
With tired and naked feet;
Comrades at each street corner,
Pals in each wretched lane,
For one and all remind me
Of what can't come again.

Of a home in an empty garret —
One room — But Heaven was there,
As my Mother begged God's blessing
On our heads, each night in prayer.
When she tucked us 'neath the coverlet,
With a smile, and a good night kiss,
And we felt that no home in the city
Was half so fine as this.

And I sometimes steal at night time
To where a tiny cross
On the mountain's silent hillside
Rises to mark my loss.
Do you wonder I love the city?
As I pace its streets in pain.
I live the days long vanished,
And feel a child again!

A WOMAN'S WORD

TO ARMS — the world is rousing,
From coast to coast it comes,
The cry of battle raging;
The warning beat of drums.

And those we love are listening,
And those we love will go,
To face the breath of battle —
The fire of England's foe.

.
But what to us Earth's freedom?
What all the future gain?
If one we love has fallen,
And sleeps among the slain.

FAITH

IT IS a winter evening,
The yellow moon looks down
Through snowflakes, quickly falling
Upon the busy town,
And on a quiet churchyard,
Beyond the city's din,
The wide church door is open
And one walks slowly in,
The dim lights round the altar
Shine on her calm, sweet face,
As she walks slowly, softly
To her accustomed place.
Clasping her hands and kneeling,
Her bright eyes full of tears,
She bends there praying fervently,
As she has done for years:
And even as she kneels there,
The thought comes swift and strong,
"Why have I had no answer
To this prayer I've prayed so long?"
Hearing a sigh she listens,
And quickly turns around,
Then sees a wee child standing
Bare feet upon the ground.
"Lord," the child whispers softly,
"You know what I have said,
Granny and me are waiting,
Waiting for daily bread,
And Granny is weak and feeble,
I left her to come to-night,

Though she said I was not to leave her
And I don't know if I was right;
But I told her that I was sleepy
And said I would go to bed,
And I looked at the moon through the
snowflakes,
It seemd to turn to red;
Then something around me whispered,
"Go to the church again
And pray once more at the railing,
It shall not be in vain.
And oh! Granny is tired and hungry,
She says, 'the end is near,'
I pray you now send us bread quickly,
And just throw it down to me here —'
The little child stops and falters,
The tears fall from his eyes,
Then some one speaks to him gently,
And he starts in sweet surprise,
"God heard and your prayer is answered,
Take this my child, and go,
Remember he hearkens in Heaven
To our prayers here below;
Although he may not answer
At first, yet in the end,
In his good time and season
An answer he will send."
They leave the church both happy —
They part in the snow by the gate,
One — with his prayer now answered —
The other — with faith to wait.—

THE DOCTOR

HE WALKS among the wounded — as of old,
Walked One who carried healing in His
hand —

And on his arm he bears a blood-red Cross,
And in his breast the sorrow of a soul,
For those that suffer, knowing well how small
Is human skill, how short the final step,
From life and light to unknown infinite,
And in the breath of battle's hideous hour,
Sees death strike; dauntless, brings his best to
bear,

Against the foe of foes, who fears no sword;
And bends beside the suffering, succouring those
That need his succor; while to such he seems
Sent from high Heaven. On his arm they see,
The cross that comforts, when man's all is done.

THE PEACE GIVERS

THERE'S a demon in the darkness,
There's a spirit by my side,
Who opens his mouth to mock me,
To mock me and deride.

"Where are the hopes of childhood."
Where is the dream of fame.
Will you leave those that love you,
Naught but a barren name?

There is no use to struggle
'Gainst the taint that stirs the blood —
In iron chains I bound you
Before you understood.

In iron chains I bound you
In iron chains you stay,
Till Time the Tyrant turns you
To naught but crumbling clay."

But when thus sore he taunts me,
With quiet step I creep
Along the silent stairway
To where my children sleep.

I touch each tiny pillow,
I kiss the lips so dear
Then all the hidden meaning
Of Heaven and earth grow clear.

FIRST-BORN

MY LITTLE child, for fear the light you
see

May be the closing of life's light for me,
For fear I may not speak to make you hear,
I tell it now my child — I love you, dear:
Love you so dear, I do not dread the pain,
But count it naught, when counted 'gainst the
gain.

My little child, when you are older grown,
I would you read the line and learnt the song;
Perchance your sight may see the seeds now sown.
May see the further, grasp, for what I long!

And grieve not that I went with all undone;
However late the call, or long the day,
Something, if not our best, remains undone
When we are bidden out of life's bright way.

When we are bidden from what life loves best,
To what no eye may see, nor heart may know,
What wonder, leaving, that our lips are pressed
Long in the parting, and we grieve to go.

Sweet! you will love me; if 'tis but a name,
A name you dream of, and a form made clear
By love's long light, but if death stirs to sound,
All that you whisper I must someway hear —

Must someway hear, for love was made immortal
With Immortality — what e'er you do,
Know that a mother, bending by Death's portal,
Faces the darkness, praying, Heart, for you.

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Author Low, May/Austin

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